UNITED
NATIONS

TD

United Nations
Conference
on Trade and
Development

Distr.
LIMITED

TD/B/WP/L.77
23 June 1997

Original : ENGLISH

TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD
Working Party on the Medium-Term Plan
and the Programme Budget
Twenty-ninth session (second part)
Geneva, 13 and 16 June 1997

AGREED CONCLUSIONS AND CHAIRMAN'S SUMMARY

(i) At the first part of its twenty-ninth session, from 16 to 17 January 1997, the Working Party reviewed the work programme of UNCTAD for the 1998-1999 biennium in the light of paragraph 107 (a) of "A Partnership for Growth and Development" which invited the Secretary-General of UNCTAD "to consult with the Working Party during the preparation of the work programme and budget from the earliest possible stage." For this purpose, the Working Party had before it a non-paper containing a draft programme of work.

(ii) At the second part of its twenty-ninth session, held on 13 and 16 June 1997, the Working Party had before it the unedited version of the UN Secretary-General's proposed programme budget covering UNCTAD for the 1998-1999 biennium.

(iii) The Working Party agreed to request the Chairman to transmit forthwith the agreed conclusions and Chairman's summary which follow to the respective chairmen of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) in order for both bodies to be in a position to take into account the Working Party's deliberations when they review the UNCTAD section of the proposed programme budget for 1998-1999 later in June 1997.

GE.97-51180

Agreed conclusions

1. The Working Party agreed that section 11A of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 provided an adequate basis for UNCTAD to carry out its mandate in the light of the outcome of UNCTAD IX and the medium-term plan as adopted by the General Assembly at its fifty-first session.

2. The Working Party reconfirmed LDCs as an important cross-cutting issue to be worked upon actively by all parts of the UNCTAD secretariat and in that context agreed that the coordinating role of the Office of the Special Coordinator for LDCs should be emphasized in the proposed programme budget.

3. The Working Party agreed on the need for greater clarity between activities funded from the regular budget and those funded from extrabudgetary sources.

4. The Working Party agreed that there should be greater consistency in the proposed programme budget.

5. The Working Party agreed that the important role and related activities of Intergovernmental Support Services should be fully reflected in the proposed programme budget.

6. The Working Party noted the importance placed by member States on the cooperation between UNCTAD, WTO and ITC. The Working Party therefore agreed that, for consistency, reference to WTO and ITC should be included in item 11A.20(c).

Chairman's summary

1. The information provided by the secretariat showed significant savings in the 1998-1999 biennium as compared to the 1996-1997 and 1994-1995 biennia. These economies had resulted from the strengthening of the US dollar, reductions in posts and intergovernmental meetings, and underspending by UNCTAD.

2. These savings appeared despite the inclusion of UNCTAD's US$ 2 million share of the operational costs of the International Computing Centre, which had previously been included under a different UN budget section. Some delegations did not appreciate this new inclusion and queried the inconsistent treatment of this central service as compared to other central services such as UNOG's Conference Services.

3. In the light of the outcome of UNCTAD IX , in particular paragraphs 103 and 107(a) of "A Partnership for Growth and Development," and General Assembly resolution 51/167, a number of delegations urged UNCTAD's Secretary-General to present, as soon as possible, the report on savings and their possible reallocation which had been requested by the General Assembly and the Trade and Development Board. Moreover, several delegations expressed strong support for the proposal to rechannel US$ 1.4 million of the savings to finance the participation of 16 experts from developing countries in each of the 10 annual expert meetings of the UNCTAD Commissions. They noted that, even with this inclusion, UNCTAD's budget would still show significant negative growth. Other delegations rejected this idea, referring *inter alia* to the Trust Fund established for this purpose.

4. Member countries expressed different views on the status of the Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on International Standards of Accounting and Reporting (ISAR) within the framework of UNCTAD and the proposed programme budget. However, there was a common understanding among member countries that the subject of ISAR was under review by the President of the Trade and Development Board through consultations. The existence of a budget line for

ISAR activities was without prejudice to any final decision on the matter. The final decision reached could therefore require additional budgetary allocations to be made available.

5. Questions were raised about the number and nature of the 53 posts cut. Some member States expressed concern about the high ratio of professional to general service posts being abolished, and hoped that this would not adversely affect UNCTAD's analytical work. Other delegations queried the reasons for abolishing regular posts while simultaneously increasing expenditure for consultants and experts.

6. Some delegations felt that while the overall budget for official travel was lower than for the previous biennium, the reduction of 53 posts should lead to a lower budget for official travel than that being proposed. In addition, the distribution of the travel budget appeared to lack balance. This was particularly so in the case of the Office of the Special Coordinator for LDCs, whose travel budget seemed disproportionately high. It was explained that this item included LDC-related travel of staff from other subprogrammes.

7. Several delegations stated firmly that UNCTAD's assistance to the Palestinian people should continue undiminished.

8. A few member States expressed concern over the inconsistent treatment of questions related to small island and transit developing countries in the proposed programme budget, which could hamper the future approach to these issues.

9. A number of delegations wished to see greater consistency in the terminology of the proposed programme budget as it related to meetings and meeting units.

10. Some member States felt that each subprogramme should show clear objectives and the expected results of its activities. Moreover, the proposed budget should reflect the need for a systematic programme of evaluation of UNCTAD's operational activities - particularly technical cooperation - for which adequate resources should be provided.

11. One delegation expressed the opinion that the programme budget presentation and format did not adequately or clearly portray UNCTAD and its activities. The Secretary-General of the United Nations was urged to adopt on a timely basis a more realistic and understandable format for future UNCTAD programme budgets.

12. Some member States expressed gratitude to the UNCTAD secretariat for its diligent efforts to restructure and reform.